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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0555
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1441
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3990
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2391
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY 0999
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 3737
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO PRIORITY 0990
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 0627
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0480
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 002621

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2016
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: AD LEADERSHIP STILL AT WAR WITH ITSELF

REF: A. CARACAS 002414
[1](#)B. CARACAS 003137

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT R. DOWNES,
REASON 1.4 (D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Accion Democratica (AD) is still divided over whether to boycott the December 3 presidential election. Secretary General Henry Ramos Allup rammed through a party

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line that it will abstain from the vote, but defections from the abstentionist camp, particularly at the rank and file level, continue apace. Consensus opposition candidate Manuel Rosales will likely be able to capitalize on the AD infighting, not only in terms of votes in the December 3 elections, but particularly if disaffected party members are driven into the arms of his party, Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT). Reluctance of many AD leaders to campaign actively on Rosales' behalf might be a boon for the former adeco if it means he can attract votes from what remains the opposition's largest party without further tarnishing his image by being closely associated with the largely discredited leadership cadre. End Summary.

Abstention the Official Policy

[1](#)2. (C) Accion Democratica (AD) continues to battle--with itself--over whether to boycott the December 3 presidential election. Since the August 7 general convention of the

party's National Directing Committee (CDN) and his subsequent announcement that the party will abstain from the vote, AD Secretary General Henry Ramos Allup has said AD will not

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throw its weight behind Un Nuevo Tiempo presidential candidate Manuel Rosales (Ref A). On August 29, AD's National Executive Committee, led by Ramos Allup, decided to apply unspecified sanctions to former AD National Assembly deputy Alfonso Marquina, who has been the most vocal proponent of the pro-participation line, as well as several other AD politicians, mayors, and labor leaders, including Manuel Cova. AD also missed the August 24 National Electoral Council (CNE) deadline to register the party in support of Rosales for the December vote, meaning that AD will not appear on the ballot. Marquina told poloffs in an August 28 meeting that some AD members had discussed trying to register the party with the CNE despite Ramos Allup's refusal. However, due to the rigidly hierarchical AD party structure, the only person with the authority to do so is the Secretary General himself. Ramos Allup is well known for his extremely inflexible pro-abstentionist stance.

Pro-Participation Line Gaining Traction

¶3. (C) Defections from Allup's abstentionist camp continue apace, following the example of AD leaders Alfonso Marquina and Pedro Pablo Alcantara. With Marquina in attendance, AD's Labor Committee met on August 28 and confirmed its decision to support Rosales' candidacy, and asserted that some 98 percent of AD workers are in favor of voting for him. Secretary General of the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers

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(CTV) Manuel Cova, who headed the Labor Committee meeting, also ratified CTV's endorsement of Rosales' candidacy. The party's Youth Committee has also reportedly fallen in line behind Marquina.

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¶4. (C) More of AD's rank and file have also pledged to support Rosales. Marquina noted that 34 of AD's 42 sitting mayors throughout the country have promised to back the unity opposition candidate. AD leaders in various states, including Nueva Esparta, Guarico, Lara, Monagas, Zulia, and Tachira have decided to participate in the December election. Marquina also reported that, according to a recent poll taken of AD focus groups, some 82 percent of regular AD members are also pro-participation.

Stormy Skies Ahead

¶5. (C) Uncertainty surrounds the recent round of AD infighting, as well as its implications for the party. In the recent conversation with poloffs, Marquina noted that the current spat is another example of the need for Ramos Allup to depart the AD scene to allow new leadership to ascend to the upper echelons of the party, but that Ramos Allup maintains a tight grip over the AD structure. Marquina did, however, dismiss rumors that he could be expelled from AD, claiming that Ramos Allup would not dare to take such drastic action in the face of Marquina's increasing popularity and strength within the party. (Note: On August 29, AD's National Executive Committee decided to apply sanctions to Marquina and several other AD leaders, but it is unclear whether those sanctions will include expulsion from the party or when they might be enacted.)

¶6. (C) Marquina highlighted that Ramos Allup's abstentionist line poses significant obstacles to the party's ability to reactivate and challenge Chavez. AD members who

choose to vote for Rosales in December will have to do so through another party, such as Rosales'. While party members who follow this course of action will not have to renounce their AD membership, Marquina did note that this will have a deleterious effect on AD morale. Marquina opined that a political party that does not participate in politics does not, as an entity, motivate its adherents.

Can Rosales Capitalize?

¶7. (C) Rosales has publicly stated that he is not "losing sleep" over whether AD will support his candidacy. One of his key campaign strategists, Hector Alonso Lopez, told poloffs August 18 that Rosales will not try to win over the AD as a party, but rather will focus on traditional AD supporters, including those who, like him, became disaffected with the party and left the party. Marquina noted that Rosales' past association with AD may help AD voters identify more closely with the candidate. The AD dissident was also optimistic that CTV's endorsement of the opposition candidate will go a long way toward rallying voters to go to the polls on election day, and that the union still has considerable sway within the Venezuelan labor movement (Comment: The CTV maintains that it has some 800,000 members, but its actual paying membership is probably much smaller. The CTV is internally divided, locked out of most negotiations with the BRV and, by default, employers (Ref B).)

¶8. (C) Nevertheless, Marquina indicated that a faction of AD leadership remains committed to the abstentionist line, and fear of reprisals, such as party expulsion, will probably prevent the majority of more minor AD leaders and members from actively campaigning on Rosales' behalf. He speculated that some 70 percent of the AD rank and file in support of Rosales will quietly vote for him on December 3. A decidedly smaller minority might be willing to promote the unity

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candidate's presidential bid.

Comment

¶9. (C) The power struggle between pro-participation and pro-abstention AD factions is not likely to be resolved before the presidential election. Marquina has since at least last year been at odds with Ramos Allup and now seems to be attracting a greater number of AD members dissatisfied with the decision to boycott and embarrassed to be part of the only major opposition party to follow that route. At the same time, Ramos Allup, notoriously authoritarian and inflexible, is unlikely to alter his public stance, particularly now that the deadline has passed for AD to register in favor of Rosales.

¶10. (C) Rosales will likely be able to capitalize on the AD infighting, particularly if disaffected party members are driven into his camp. An ongoing reluctance of many AD leaders to campaign actively on Rosales' behalf might, in the end, be a boon for the former adeco, if it means he can attract votes from what remains the opposition's largest party without further tarnishing his image by being closely associated with the largely discredited leadership cadre. In this regard, Rosales may potentially get the best of both worlds--strong support from AD voters, including perhaps some grassroots organizational help, without the "stain" of official endorsement of the discredited AD leadership. An official embrace from the AD would give the chavista organization an excellent talking point to attack Rosales as one more "Fourth Republic" politico. To date, Rosales has played this very intelligently, getting some support while staying out of Ramos Allup's embrace.

WHITAKER